

REMARKS

This Amendment is submitted in reply to the non-final Office Action dated March 8, 2006, issued in connection with the above-identified application. Claims 1-3 have been canceled and claims 4-7 are all the claims presently pending in the application. By this Amendment, independent claims 4 and 6 have been amended, and claims 8-9 have been added. No new matter has been introduced by this Amendment. Accordingly, favorable reconsideration is respectfully requested.

I. Examiner Interview

The Applicants thank Examiner Bello for the interview conducted with the Applicants' representative on May 23, 2006. During the interview, it was emphasized that neither Denkin nor Liu appear to disclose, teach or suggest all the features of the recited add and drop modules. In particular, neither reference includes add and drop modules that perform the actual function of inserting and removing channels, or are configured on different boards in the same node. At the conclusion of the interview, it was suggested to amend the claims to at least clarify the function of the add and drop modules i.e., inserting and dropping channels in the network.

II. Claim Rejections

In the Office Action, claims 4 and 5 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(e) as being anticipated by Denkin (U.S. Patent No. 6,266,168, hereafter "Denkin"). Additionally, claims 6 and 7 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Liu et al. (U.S. Patent No. 5,953,141, hereafter "Liu"). The Applicants traverse the rejections noted above for the following reasons.

To expedite prosecution, the Applicants have herein amended independent claims 4 and 6 to further distinguish over the cited prior art. Specifically, claims 4 and 6 have been amended to point out that the add and drop modules function to *insert and drop channels in the network*, as suggested by the Examiner in the interview conducted on May 23, 2006. Additionally, the claims have also been amended to point out that the add and drop modules are positioned or inserted *directly* in series. These features of the present invention are fully supported by the Applicants' disclosure and are not believed to be disclosed, taught or suggested by the cited prior art (see, Applicants' Application, page 4, lines 26-30, Fig. 3 and Fig. 4).

In Denkin, Fig. 1 illustrates two separate nodes 125, 150 connected by a bidirectional service line 25, 26 and a bidirectional protection line 26. Each node 125, 150 has a multiplexing unit OMU 10-1, 10-2 and a demultiplexing unit ODU 20-1, 20-2. However, the multiplexing units OMU 10-1, 10-2 and demultiplexing units ODU 20-1, 20-2 cannot be compared with the claimed add and drop modules because they do not insert and drop channels. Conversely, in the present invention, the add and drop modules are implemented to insert or drop channels in a ring network. Additionally, in Denkin, there is no direct connection between any multiplexers OMU 10-1, 10-2 or demultiplexers ODU 20-1, 20-2 because they are located at different nodes (i.e., 125, 150). In the present invention, there is a single node with first and second drop modules, and first and second add modules, wherein at least some are positioned or inserted directly in series.

After a detailed review of Liu, the reference fails to overcome the deficiencies noted above in Denkin. To the contrary, Liu (in Fig 11) teaches or suggests an extended version of an add-drop device, which has no protection feature. In fact, there is no hint at all in Fig. 11 that protection can be extended to the add-drop device. More specifically, both data streams have the same direction and appear to be transmitted over the same optical cable. Thus, effective protection functions are not possible using this arrangement. Finally, there is no hint that the alleged drop and add modules can be implemented on different boards or that the board can be divided in any way.

Therefore, independent claims 4 and 6 (as amended) are believed to be clearly distinguishable over Denkin and Liu, individually or in combination, for at least the reasons noted above. Likewise, dependent claims 5 and 7 are also believed to be distinguishable over Denkins and Liu, individually or in combination, based on their dependency from independent claims 4 and 6.

III. New Claims

With regard to new independent claim 8, the claim is distinguishable over the cited prior art because, similar to independent claim 6, the claim recites add and drop modules that insert and drop channels. Additionally, claim 8 further recites that at least one add module and one drop module are removable without interrupting signal transmission between network nodes. Neither of these features appear to be disclosed, taught or suggested by Denkin or Liu,

individually or in combination. Thus, independent claim 8 is clearly distinguishable over the cited prior art. Likewise, new dependent claim 9 is clearly distinguishable over the cited prior based on its dependency from independent claim 8.

IV. Conclusion

Based on the foregoing, the Applicants respectfully request withdrawal of the claim rejections and allowance of the application. If there are any additional fees that are due in connection with this application as a whole, the Director is authorized to deduct those fees from Deposit Account No. 02-1818. If such a deduction is made, please indicate Attorney Docket No. 0112740-261 on the account statement.

Respectfully submitted,

BELL BOYD & LLOYD LLC

BY 

Peter Zura

Reg. No. 48,196

Customer No. 29177

Phone: (312) 807-4208

Dated: June 8, 2006